BRITISH WATER-COLOUR PAINTING OF TODAY

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BRITISH WATER-COLOUR PAINTING OF TO-DAY

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1921

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EDITED BY GEOFFREY HOLME
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NOTE.—The Editor desires to express his thanks to the artists and owners (their names appear with the respective illustrations) who have kindly lent their drawings for reproduction in this volume.

PREFATORY NOTE

To those who are accustomed to visit the art galleries with a view to considering the work of contemporary artists the numerous exhibitions of modern water-colour painting offer an interesting study. So uneven in quality is the prolific output in this fascinating medium that it is not surprising if, from first impressions, one is apt to form but a moderate opinion of the general standard of the exhibits. Yet if we examine more closely the work of certain of our present-day water-colourists, one is bound to admit that Great Britain still holds her own as the leader of water-colour painting. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that alongside many drawings of but little artistic value may often be found works showing undoubted ability, and worthy to rank with some of the best examples of what is generally considered the great period of British water-colour painting, the first half of the nineteenth century. This may sound a bold statement and one to which many lovers of the works of the older men will take exception; but we are convinced that if the question is approached with an open mind it will be admitted that there is justification for the assertion. It must, however, be realized, in the first place, that all sincere art is the expression of an age, and this maxim is especially applicable to the productions of the earlier water-colour men. Their art served its time and their works have been handed down to us as a precious heritage, esteemed alike by connoisseurs and artists. The best work of to-day, too, is essentially the expression of the period, and it is only fair that it should be judged as such. To confine criticism to comparison with the drawings of the old water-colourists shows, surely, a restricted outlook and a lack of appreciation of the real mission of all pictorial art, viz., the expression of the individual vision. The object of this volume is to place before our readers reproductions, as like as possible to the originals, of carefully selected examples of the work of some of the foremost living British artists in water-colour, who, while conscious of the high standard of merit displayed by the earlier men, and appreciating the value of the study of their works, have dis-

covered for themselves, by sincere and persistent endeavour, new possibilities in technique and treatment which have enabled them to give fresh and individual utterance to their impressions. In their exploitation of the medium they have gained knowledge of the wonderful potentialities of water-colour as a means of artistic expression. If we examine carefully the drawings reproduced here we find that the methods and treatment employed vary in nearly every case, and that each drawing is the logical interpretation of a definite and personal line of thought. They exemplify the fact that the work of one artist differs from that of another, not because of the variation in choice of subject, but in the distinctive pictorial conception and technique. They show, too, that it is wrong to suppose that there is only one method of treating and applying water-colour. Take, for instance, the use of flat tones to obtain decorative effect, so much affected by artists of to-day. This particular practice may be applied in a variety of ways all of which may prove entirely successful when handled with right judgment.

The "finished" drawing, with its wealth of detail, has almost disappeared. It has been supplanted by the photograph, and what was achieved in days gone by with infinite toil, can now be obtained in a few minutes by a machine, albeit it lacks the essence of all creative art—individual expression. The modern tendency in water-colour painting points more and more in the direction of recording this essence in a visible form, and it is hoped that the examples in the following pages will give some idea of the various methods being adopted to achieve this end. While much of the work which is being produced to-day—reflecting, as it does, the general state of affairs, desperately groping after ideas but dimly conceived—may, in time, develop so that it reaches a form which can be understood by the lay mind, at present it cannot be said to have advanced much beyond the experimental stage, and it has therefore been omitted from this survey. The water-colours which have been chosen for illustration are not experiments, but the mature efforts of artists who have succeeded in realizing a definite aim.

PLATE 1
"THE PARTING GUEST"
BY ANNA AIRY, R.E., R.I.
(Size, 6¾ × 11¼ in.)

ROYAL

PLATE 2
" PENINSULAR "
BY WALTER BAYES, A.R.W.S
(Size, $17\frac{1}{4} \times 16\frac{1}{2}$ in.)

PLATE 3
"WILLOW POOL"
BY S. J. LAMORNA BIRCH, R.W.S.
(Size, 23½ × 19½ in.)

PLATE 4

"LE PONT NEUF

BY FRANK BRANGWYN, R.A., A.R.W.S

(Size, 23¾ × 16¾ in.)

(In the possession of E. P. Dawbarn, Esq.)

PLATE 5
"AFTERNOON"
BY F. GREGORY BROWN, R.B.A.
(Size. 5 × 5 in.)

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PLATE 6

"WINTER ON HUMBIE WATER"

BY ROBERT BURNS

(Size, 30 × 20 in.)

(In the possession of J. B. Dunn, Esq., A.R.S.A.)

PLATE 7
"YVON"
BY D. Y. CAMERON, R.A., R.S.A., R.W.S.
(Size, 5½ × 10 in.)
(In the Barbizon House Gallery, London)

YVON
RESTAURANT
LOGEUR

PLATE 8
LANDSCAPE
BY GEORGE CLAUSEN, R.A., R.W.S.
(Size, 12½ × 10 in.)

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY, LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE

PLATE 9

" MANNEQUINS "

BY W. RUSSELL FLINT, R.W.S., R.S.W.

(Size, 19¼ × 26¼ in.)

PLATE 10
"ON THE SIMPLON PASS"
BY CHARLES M. GERE, A.R.W.S.
(Size, 12 × 8⅝ in.)

PLATE II

"SUSANNA"

BY D. W. HAWKSLEY

(Size, 15 × 27 in.)

In the possession of Miss C. Holland.)

PLATE 12
" SNOWSHOWERS, ORMSIDE "
By SIR C. J. HOLMES
(Size, 13 × 10 in.)
(In the possession of Messrs. P. & D. Colnaghi & Co.)

Snowshowers - Ormside
C.S. Holmes 1971

PLATE 13
" BOGLIASCO—LIGURIA "
BY CECIL KING
(Size, 20 × 13 in.)

PLATE 14
" PENNAN "
BY JAMES McBEY
(Size, 8¾ × 12 in.)
(In the possession of Messrs. P. & D. Colnaghi & Co.)

Pourville, 6 Octobre 1920.

PLATE 15
THE MODEL "
BY SIR WILLIAM ORPEN, R.A.
(Size, 26½ × 20⅛ in.)
(In the National Gallery of British Art)

PLATE 16
" ST. ALBANS "
BY A. W. RICH
(Size, 15 × 10¾ in.)

Alfred W. Rich

PLATE 17
'A FLORAL DECORATION"
BY H. DAVIS RICHTER, R.I.
(Size, 23¾ × 19 in.)

PLATE 18
" EVENING IN LONDON "
BY F. CAYLEY ROBINSON, R.W.S.
(Size, 13¼ × 14½ in.)
(In the possession of Cecil French, Esq.)

PLATE 19

"SAN VIGILIO: LAGO DI GARDA"

BY J. S. SARGENT, R.A., HON. R.S.A., R.W.S

(Size, $20\frac{1}{4} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$ in.)

(In the National Gallery of British Art.)

PLATE 20
"PRINCESS BOUDOUR"
BY GEORGE SHERINGHAM
(Size, $18\frac{1}{4} \times 9$ in.)

PLATE 21

"SNOW ON THE MOATBRAE, KIRKCUDBRIGHT"

BY E. A. TAYLOR

(Size, 11 × 9 in.)

(In the Burlington Gallery, London)

E.A. TAYLOR

PLATE 22
"THE FOREST POOL"
BY FRED TAYLOR, R.I.
(Size, 39½ × 34½ in.)
(In the possession of Lt.-Col. F. K. McClean)

PLATE 23
"S. PIETRO AT GIANICOLO"
BY W. WALCOT, R.B.A.
(Size, 18 × 12$\frac{1}{8}$ in.)
In the Barbizon House Gallery, London)

PLATE 24

"AFTER RAIN, NORTH ITALY"

"HE WATERETH THE HILLS FROM HIS CHAMBERS"

BY J. WALTER WEST, R.W.S.

(Size, 24 × 20 in.)

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